Macy Laster

ENGL 015

July 27, 2011

Audience: The President of Penn State, Graham Spanier

Dear Graham Spanier,

A necessity is not a choice. 2011 is a year of new ideas, new revelations , and most of all new needs. In this modern age, success is imperative to survival and in order to survive one needs money. In this case, the fittest are those with educations. Education is the key, a key that is out of reach for many due to the expenses it brings upon the student and their family. In this day and age, being an individual that “do[es] more for less” (Daily Collegian) makes it nearly impossible to thrive and to even have an opportunity for success, and just like an individual in the job market Pennsylvania State University cannot do more for less either.

Currently Penn State tuition is $15,250 per year for an in-state student and $27, 114 for an out of state student (CollegeBoard.com) . Right now Penn State has the highest tuition rate in Pennsylvania and one of the highest country for in-state tuition (U-Wire). This year the tuition bill was raised roughly 3% as a result of Governor Corbett’s proposal to shrink the support of State Universities from last year’s $334 million to $165 million (Penn Live). According to *The Daily Collegian* amounts to about $356 for an in-state student and $465 for an out-of-state student. While such an increase may seem small, the effects on the student are vast. Financial Aid results came out months ago, before the increased tuition was approved; the average student received $9,529 and roughly 56% of student aid needed was met, leaving thousands to be paid by their families and loans (CollegeBoard.com). Even though the students and their families were aware of the amount of financial aid they would receive the rise in tuition was unforeseen, and this left many promising students out in the cold. For some about 400 dollars is nothing, for others that is sacrificing dinner and taking up a new job to make ends meet; no family should under-go such hardships just for a shot at their child’s success. Therefore, I propose a plan, a plan that would stem from our continuously growing Penn State family to the homes and wallets of current students and into the hands of new member’s of our institution. Rather than increasing tuition the money can be raised through other means that are more logical, place less strain on the individual student, and allow for monetary need to be more widespread, rather than honed in on a specific area, the tuition bill.

Pennsylvania State University received a total of 55,411 applications for the 2011-2012 school year (Penn State Admissions), and each application cost 50 dollars. The tuition increase amounts to around 350 dollars per student, and while this current rise in tuition is far less than the 9.8% increase that occurred in 2009 (Post Gazette), the country was not in a period of economic recovery and record high unemployment rates, which are large factors in the effects of tuition increases . One of the ways to remove the price increase would be to raise the price of application to the University. By raising the price from $50 to $65 the university will increase its revenue by roughly $831,165 per year which would account for roughly 6 percent of the tuition increase for University Park students. While 6 percent does not seem like a large piece of the 14 million, the amount of money that would be gained through the tuition increase, it does account for a portion of it which contributes to the overall goal, raising the money that the government snatched out of the hands of our University. The purpose of the plan is not to completely get rid of the tuition increases it is to minimize them as much as possible while still gaining the amount of money necessary to keep our beloved Pennsylvania State University up to par. Another large expense that students are willing to undertake , unlike tuition increases, are Penn State football tickets.

The roaring, the cheering 107,282 fans all bleeding blue and white joining together regardless of race, religion or background for a common goal, Penn State Football. World renowned, the second largest stadium in the Western Hemisphere and the fourth largest in the world, Beaver Stadium is a landmark here at Penn State as it has been the site of some of the most historical events in our school’s history (Collegian). This year season tickets for students cost around 250 dollars. In a survey conducted by the Survey Research Center at Pennsylvania State University, of the numerous reasons why students select Penn State as their college of choice, football is ranked number one. In the 2009-2010 football season ticket sales, tickets sold out in record time, which further proves the dedication of Penn State football fans. A total of nearly 50,000 season tickets are sold every year including student sales and alumni/general public sales. If season ticket prices were raised by $25 the University would gross an additional $1,250,000. In combination with the money gained from the increase in application fees, 2 million dollars would be raised.

Governor Tom Corbett’s proposal to cut Penn State’s funding caught not only the students but the staff off guard as well, and while both are being penalized in different ways ignoring the problem does not make it disappear. Penn State has worked hard to anticipate the budget cuts and while our institution was cut $4.1 billion and other Universities and organizations received a much smaller cut we must take action, regardless of the fact that “not in our wildest imaginations could we have anticipated a proposal like this” (Penn Live) .The third and final means of producing the money is by actually cutting back on various construction projects. On July 15th, 2011 , the same day the increase in tuition was approved by the school board various projects were approved as well. $3.6 million was to be spent to fund the “Breazeale Reactor” at the University Park Campus, which is a section of the Radiation Science and Engineering Center. The second project which was approved is projected to cost $4.5 million and involves installing new artificial turf on the lacrosse field , located west of the Multisport Indoor Facility. Both projects appear to be un-pressing and can be postponed until finances at Penn State are back in order. Cutting these two projects which together total $8.1 million, as well as raising the price of season football tickets and applications which would rake in roughly $2.5 million could result in covering just over $10 million of the budget deficit. Leaving only $2 million to be paid through student tuition, thus resulting in a $50 tuition increase.

Working as one, Pennsylvania State University , as an institution must link hands and wallets to continue to build and grow as a leader in education, research, and sports infamy and to ultimately cut costs for students. Assisting each other by keeping costs down helps Penn State appear to be a more desirable University, even more so than it already is, and to maintain the jobs held by University employees. 160 jobs in the College of Agriculture were cut during the same meeting in which the approval of the tuition increase and the construction projects occurred (Daily Collegian). In short, the plan of releasing construction projects, increasing the price of football season tickets, and raising the price of application to Penn State would eliminate many of the issues raised by Corbett’s flawed plan that cut government funding to the University. If carried out properly this plan could minimize tuition increases to the minute size of roughly $50 per student, which is a small price to pay to maintain an education and institution that will assist the individual in reaching success in this tough world. Therefore, the choice is clear, we must enforce a plan that works with the needs of our institution as well as our students and work as one to overcome the government budget cut without a tuition increase.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Macy Laster

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